



AT THE PLAY

IN A BERNHARDT ROLE

Boston Triumph of a Portland Stage Favorite Well Known to Cordray's Patrons.

Portland's regular theater-goers will probably be able to recall with interest Minnie Tittell, who a few years ago was seen in short skirts playing little girl parts at Cordray's. Since those days she has reached the dignity of long skirts and matrimony; and is known now as Minnie Tittell Bruns. She has, moreover, developed into a full-fledged emotional actress who is venturesome enough to attempt roles made famous by Bernhardt and Fanny Davenport, and what is even more surprising—talented enough to make a success of them.

She has just appeared with Melbourne MacDowell and a company of 10 members in Boston as "Theodora," in the Sardou drama, written expressly for Bernhardt. Following are some of the press comments upon the play and her work:

Lewis Servant in Boston Journal: In "Theodora" Sardou makes use of his favorite theme, the fierce, burning passion of a woman for a man and of a man for a woman. The woman in this instance is the Empress Theodora, who once on a time had been a performer in the circus at Alexandria, and the man is Andreas, a conspirator against the cowardly and despicable Emperor Justinian. Andreas, modeled in heroic form, of course, unaware that his love is the hated courtesan, against whose rule he is plotting.

Boldly Contrasted Emotions.
With this sensational material, and with Sardou to mold it, the dramatic outcome is not difficult to imagine—scenes of wild wailing and of boldly contrasted emotions, torture and death, the clang of arms, a wild race in the arena with a man's life at the stake, and finally poison, a despairing woman and the burning of Byzantium amid all the luridness of red fire. Little wonder that the gallery well-nigh exhausted itself with ear-splitting whistles. The character of Theodora has Bernhardt written all over it. It is a creation of the most violent extremes, queenly majesty, girlish joyousness, flinty cruelty, pleading womanliness, manlike courage and passionate seductiveness.

It would not be true to say that Mrs. Bruns at any point reached the full of the tremendous theatrical possibilities of the part. Only a Bernhardt could do that. But Mrs. Bruns succeeded remarkably well in suggesting most of the many moods involved in the Sardou scheme. The third act, involving the quarrel with and defiance of the Emperor, and ending with the death of Marcellus, after his failure in his attempt to kill Justinian, was played by Mrs. Bruns with admirable force and with considerable conviction.

A Severe Tax.
Boston Post: Neither Mr. Bruns nor his wife have ever before appeared publicly in this city, but have made both fame and fortune in the West, especially in California.

Mrs. Bruns, who was formerly Minnie Tittell, is rather a slight woman, with an expressive face and an easy and graceful stage presence. That she has had experience was apparent from her entrance, and if she did not always fully meet the requirements of the role the defects were physical rather than those of intelligence. The character of Theodora, as drawn by Sardou is exceedingly complex. Such a portrayal is a severe tax on any actress. Sarah Bernhardt, who has given the play in French, found it one of her most difficult and exhausting roles, and it is not surprising, therefore, that Mrs. Bruns did not realize the part to its full extent; but withal she displayed clear intelligence, even at the moments when she could not furnish the required strength to the reading. She was most warmly commended for her work, and in the hipodrome races, when she rode to save her lover's life, she received a veritable ovation.

Superabundant Energy.
Boston Globe: Naturally the interest in "Theodora" centers in the name part. Mrs. Bruns played conscientiously, and the reception she received might be construed into a personal triumph, for she was several times called before the curtain. She showed an intensity in the emotional scenes that expressed her feeling in presenting the part, and at times there was a suggestion in her appearance, assisted by her makeup, perhaps, of Bernhardt.

In spite of the construction of the play, which is in many senses a one-character piece, Mr. MacDowell as Andreas towered among his fellows in the cast. His easy diction, graceful carriage and massive physique, made his work appear like second nature. He "looked his part," every inch, and sustained his old-time reputation.

Daily Advertiser: There was more enthusiasm in the audience than behind the footlights. This was not the shortcoming of Mrs. Bruns, to be sure. There was, indeed, in her rendition, a superabundance of energy. Her first scene was splendidly done. She was the Empress of the Eastern emperors, and again the little circus rider. Here she was convincing. As the action quickened, however, moments appeared when her balance was lost. These shortcomings were always of the middle

register, so to speak, as she was charming and satisfying in the unstemmed current of emotion, so she rose to the greatest heights and commanded admiration. Her scene in Act III with Justinian was more than disappointing, but in the death

more statement of fact. It is also fact that there were moments of inadequacy, but they appeared to me rather those of inexperience and misapplied power than of temperament. Although not beautiful, the actress has a most expressive, and, so to speak, tantalizing face, over which the emotions play freely and usually appropriately. In mere vocal expression she is almost faultless. The English language is seldom spoken on the stage with greater regard for the component parts of words and the full sentence of a phrase or sentence is seldom or never neglected. There is a slight deficiency in breadth of style, easily accounted for under the inexperience theory, but sincerity is nowhere lacking. Emotion without undue stress, most captivating grace, delicate suggestions in inflection, emphasis, or motion or a pause—all these are appealingly frequent. There is occasionally a trace of self-consciousness, and apparently overmastering desire to act which mars the generally excellent effect. It could scarcely be otherwise in the circumstances of a practically first appearance in a most arduous role of a stranger in a critical city. That she did so well is in itself a triumph. That she won emphatic personal success was due to ability pure and simple.

Mr. Melbourne MacDowell brought the best of his powers to the role of Andreas and played with effective and convincing power.

A WEEK OF LIGHT COMEDY.
The Prevailing Class of Productions at Local Theaters.

During the past week the attractions at the various playhouses in Portland were of the light, frothy variety, and comedy reigned throughout. The Mar-



ALICE JOHNSON, WITH THE FRAWLEY COMPANY.

riage of Marcellus she touched the true chord. Mr. MacDowell was the dominant note of the piece. The stage was his from the

when was dark until Friday evening, when Hoyt's "A Trip to Chinatown" played to good business for three performances. One or two clever specialties



JOHN W. JESS, AS LARRY MOONEY, IN "A HOT OLD TIME."

redemption the performance from being commonplace. The McCoy sisters and Sam Mason were the bright particular stars in their dazzling acrobatic dance, done with all the grace and abandon that youth could exclaim. "The Hotest Cook in Dixie," a combination of colored peo-



COMEDY BUT IT'S FUNNY AS "A HOT OLD TIME."

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plays his double and is a partner in his misdeeds during the piece, is another actor whose reputation is that of a genuine funny man. John C. Lewis is known from coast to coast as an especially clever character actor, while in John Gleason and Frank Hayes the company acknowledges two of the handsomest young men on the farce-comedy stage. G. Clayton Frye plays the part of the wild and woolly Westerner in "A Hot Old Time," and his performance has won enthusiastic praise.

FRAWLEY COMPANY COMING.
They Will Open at Cordray's Next Sunday Night.
It will be welcome news to the Portland public to learn that T. Daniel Frawley and company—for thus the name stands now—will begin a week's engagement at Cordray's next Sunday. The piece de resistance of their engagement here will be "Secret Service."

Tonight at San Francisco the popular young actor-manager is closing a season of 12 weeks, which has not only been the most prosperous in his career, but has also proved a record-breaker at the Grand Opera-House, the largest theater on the Pacific Coast. During the performance of "Secret Service," it was found necessary to remove the orchestra from its accustomed place nearly every night in order to make room for the crowds anxious to see the Frawleys in William Gillette's best play.

During the week this piece was presented, the attendance reached the enormous total of over 25,000, and this, notwithstanding the fact that the play had a previous run in San Francisco of four weeks to tremendous business. Although Mr. Frawley and his company are pronounced favorites in the California metropolis, the press and public have never warmed to them before as they did in this scathing military drama. Mr. Frawley appeared in Gillette's part of Captain Thorne, and it is said that he fitted to a T (no pun intended) his self-contained and imperturbable personality, and talent for quiet, repressed and intense acting.

During the company's stay in Portland two other plays will be presented besides "Secret Service." These are "The Senator," in which William H. Crane starred so long and so successfully, and "Sardou's "Mme. Sans Gene," which was so brilliantly handled by them on their last visit to Portland. Later in the season a return engagement will be played at which two other plays will be given. On the present tour the company is the largest ever directed by Mr. Frawley, and a complete scenic equipment is carried for each play presented.

The personnel of the company is substantially the same as when it was last here, though some new faces will be seen. Among the recent additions to the Frawley forces are Miss Alice Johnson, an Eastern actress of reputation; Miss Grace Cahill, also from the East; Mr. Harry Cashman, a comedian and character actor; and Mr. David McCortney, a young premier late of Charles Froberman's company. Miss Van Buren, Captain Reynolds, J. B. Amory and the other former favorites still remain.